

71.1 If Only I Had Been There

There is a meme on Facebook that provokes serious self-reflection. It makes the point that if you have ever wondered what you would have done if you had lived during the rise of Hitler and the holocaust, you merely have to look at what you are doing in the current crisis. For instance, some people today do not see a problem and would not have seen it in the 1930s, and they would have gone along with their government as sheep to the slaughter as they are today.

There are those today who see the issues but opt not to speak. They would have been silent before Hitler, too. Some contemporaries have decided to speak out against the current tyranny despite official and unofficial opposition. They would have been proactive then, too. Soon after Hitler came to power in 1933, he met privately with Niemoller and two others. At that meeting, Niemoller saw that Hitler was an evil, dangerous deceiver whose plan was to hijack the church and turn it into a state servant. From then on, Niemoller began speaking and organizing against Hitler and the Nazi party.¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer also acted against the Nazis, but most churchmen remained silent, going along to get along, just like today.

Maybe you have heard the stories of the churches along the railroad leading to concentration camps that turned up their music and singing when the cattle cars of prisoners, crying for help, rolled down the tracks. We want to say that we would not have done such a thing but would have been brave against the evil forces of Nazism and boldly withstood that evil empire. Would we? We can tell by what we are doing or not doing today.

I want to pose some self-reflection. Let's go back in American History and then let's look at the Bible for a moment and ask ourselves if we would be as bold as some of our heroes. We only have to look at our current activities to decide. Remember, Jesus said in **Luke 16:10** (NKJV):

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

Would you have signed the Declaration of Independence? There were people then and, no doubt, people now who would not have gone along with our separation from Great Britain. Many opposed it then, and some today want to take America's sovereignty. But then some fancy themselves as patriots who would say, "*I'm in, give me the pen, and I will sign.*"

If you thought that or something similar, do you realize what you were doing by signing the document? Signing the Declaration was a point of no return for our Founders, and the King branded them as traitors as soon as they signed the statement. These men put their lives and the lives of their families on the line. In addition to their lives, they also freely offered their fortunes and sacred honor. Witnesses said that the room was solemnly silent as the delegates stepped forward to sign the Declaration.

Would you have risked life, property, and honor for the cause of Liberty? What are you risking today in the face of modern oppression? If you didn't do it now, you would not have then.

I want to let you know my frustration with some Christians, especially church leaders. Many Christians want to ignore the perils of this world and only focus on the world to come, so they miss the Patriotic call to defend our unalienable rights. **Dr. Benjamin Rush** was among our Founders who saw the connection between patriotism and Christianity. He wrote:

"Patriotism is as much a virtue as justice and is as necessary for the support of societies as natural affection is for the support of families. The Amor Patriae is both a moral and a religious duty (emphasis

¹ Ramanathan, Rama. "Pastor Niemoller, Hitler and our Neighbours." , Bangsar Lutheran Church, 2022, bangsarlutheran.org/pastor-niemoller-hitler-and-our-neighbours/.

added). It comprehends not only the love of our neighbors but of millions of our fellow creatures, not only of the present but of future generations. This virtue we find constitutes a part of the first characters in history. The holy men of old, in proportion as they possessed a religion, were endowed with a public spirit. What did not Moses forsake and suffer for his countrymen? What shining examples of Patriotism do we behold in Joshua, Samuel, Maccabeus, and all the illustrious princes, captains, and prophets amongst the Jews! St. Paul almost wishes himself accused for his countrymen and kinsmen after the flesh. Even our Savior himself gives a sanction to this virtue. He confined his miracles and gospel at first to his own country.”

Let me briefly shift our attention and ask, would you have faced down evil with the following men:

- Noah as he built the ark in a world consumed by wickedness?
- Abraham in creating a godly heritage for the world?
- Moses provoking Pharaoh for Israel’s freedom?
- David challenging the blasphemous giant in the valley?
- The Prophet Nathan confronting King David’s immoral choices?

We want to say, “*Yes, I would have gone with them,*” but would we? What are you building to fight the all-consuming wickedness of our day? How are you impacting a godly heritage for future generations? How are you standing up to evil leaders and unruly giants?

It is much easier to hide in our basements and sing, “*This world is not my home; I’m just a passing through,*” rather than engage the enemy in the spiritual war Paul describes in **Ephesians 6:10-20**. Don’t forget that Jesus told us to *OCCUPY* or “do business” until He comes again in **Luke 19:13**. Nazi Germany occupied France in WWII and did their business of oppressing the French citizens. Our job is to occupy our earthly territory and do our business of freeing people from the tyranny of sin and death so that we can do God’s will on earth as it is in heaven and that His kingdom will come to all, as Jesus stated in **Matthew 6:10**.

We are like the vapor that comes and goes (**James 4:14**), but we have a job to do while we are here. We must not ignore evil, and we must oppose it. We cannot boast of what we would have or might have done. We determine what we will do and act. Jesus pronounced a woe upon a particular group of high-sounding Pharisees in **Matthew 23:29-30** (NKJV). He said:

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

Jesus knew what kind of people these Pharisees and scribes were by their actions. They may have thought they were righteous, but their corrupt activities exposed them for who they were. We can do the same things as them. We can believe we are godly patriots but never act to expand the rule of God in the world or defend the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness He has given us. The majority of so-called Christians reject their responsibility of national stewardship and won’t vote, let alone try to improve the country with the word of God.

Troublesome times are here and they may get worse before they get better. We are not the first ones to face hardships but let’s determine that we will act in harmony with God to engage His enemies. Let’s . . .

Keep The Light of *Self-Reflection and Determination* Burning!